The "Honest Style" of Ben Jonson's *Epigrams* and *The Forest*

JAMES P.
CROWLEY

Summary: *During his imprisonment for the murder of Gabriel Spencer in 1598, Ben Jonson converted to the outlawed Roman Catholic Church, and for the next 12 years made no attempt to conceal his recusant status. Jonson's biography and the historical documents treating conversion and recusancy offer evidence of the importance Jonson placed on codified religion, and provide a distinctly religious context for much of what has been long assumed to be an exclusively classically-based secular ethics operating in his writing.*

That much of Ben Jonson's poetry is socially oriented is a critical common place. This aspect of his poetry has shaped most readings and has raised to the point of general assumption that Jonson's poetry is almost entirely secular. Yet the presence of some clearly religious concepts in Jonson's first two published collections (*Epigrams* and *The Forest*), printed under his scrutiny in the 1616 Folio, calls for a reassessment of this view, much as a better understanding of Jonson's ongoing interest in religious matters should answer specious arguments about his "sincerity." Moreover, such a reassessment will help show that what distinguishes Jonson's poetry is not only the plain style, the neo-classicism, and the well-defined ethical system, but also the manner in which he handles the fusion of two important cultural currents: the anthropocentrism of contemporary religious thought and the phenomenon of the stylized honest man. Among observations both satiric and laudatory, we find enough evidences in *Epigrams* and *The Forest* to indicate that Jonson consciously wished to separate himself from a purely secular poetic tradition, and from association with contemporaries who were using the court and patronage system without

conscience. In a sense, he tells the reader how to read his verse by providing signposts to prevent the assumption that his ethical stances and social criticisms lack a solid religious foundation.

We do not, admittedly, find an abundance of traditional religious symbolism and language, nor an abundance of texts in which Jonson wrestles with his own shortcomings, and so the trend to explain Jonson's verse in terms of something else — his similarity to Bacon, his dissimilarity to Donne, and so forth — points to a serious problem: it is often easier to discuss his works by analogy than by analysis. In many of Donne's and Herbert's poems, for example, we see faith of professional clergymen; Jonson was a layman. My intention in this essay is not to re-classify Jonson as a religious poet, nor to de-emphasize the work of generations of readers who have traced his classical borrowings and allusions. But by concentrating on those references, and by noting the absence of the transcendent, sacramental, even mystical trends of some contemporaries, what we may have overlooked in *Jonson's* version of what constituted the religious, and he is surprisingly consonant with the most orthodox Christian teachings. He does not conform to a rigid schema in which the religious and the social (or political) or the sacred and the secular are totally incompatible. If we separate formally theological (or explicitly religious) matters from moral and ethical issues, we have, in effect, imposed academic distinctions that were relatively unimportant to him, as they often were to Erasmus, More, and Vives — men of faith and learning whom Jonson greatly admired.

Further, by expecting an emotional intensity that characterizes much of Donne and Herbert, we risk holding Jonson to an unfair and questionably applicable standard. Jonson addresses this matter at the opening of "To Heaven" (*The Forest* XV), with his speaker asking,

Good, and great God, can I not think of thee,
But it must, straight, my melancholy be?
Is it interpreted in me disease,
That, laden with my sins, I seek for ease? (1-4)¹

The connection between contemplation and melancholy, or religiosity and anguish, annoys the speaker because he does not see the two as inextricably tied. Extremes in behavior and extremes in emotion are, generally speaking, among the things Jonson attacks in his writings; that he should exercise a restraint consistent with his "classicism" is not surprising. If comparisons must be made, we might at least realize that emotional passages that seem quite effective and natural in Donne's "Holy Sonnets" or Herbert's *The Temple*

would appear profoundly out of character — indeed rather hollow — in Jonson's works. Even the two funeral poems for his children, marking times of great grief and loss, gather much of their strength by the control they display. Rather than judging from the number of religious references — of from their lack of either emotional anguish or theological ingenuity — that Jonson himself lacked religious conviction, we should conclude quite the opposite. Jonson's plain style might not suit an ecstatic, but it does serve the needs of a poet who found in religion matter for rational consideration. By taking Jonson's religious interests seriously, the modern reader may find in his poetry a remarkable demonstration of religiosity in his commitment to an "honest" style.

In an important passage in the *Conversations*, William Drummond of Hawthornden records that "Of all styles he [Jonson] loved to be named honest, and hath of that an hundred letters so naming him" (658-659). It is a simple enough label, yet a crucial one, for it hinges on a highly complex word that both looks back to classical ethics and directly at issues of religiosity and earthly behavior in Jonson's day. Jonson used the terms "honest" and "honesty" many times in his work, and in a manner that shows his understanding of them to be far beyond simple candor or probity.² Among his recordings in *Discoveries*, for example, are the description of Shakespeare as "(indeed) honest" (813); the claim that two things "give a man reputation in council . . . the opinion of his honesty; and the opinion of his wisdom" (105-107); a pronouncement that "Wisdom without honesty is mere craft, and cozenage" (111-112); and a passage on *adulatio*, in which he records:

I have seen, that poverty makes men do unfit things; but honest men should not do them: they should gain otherwise. Though a man be hungry, he should not play the parasite. That hour, wherein I would repent me to be honest: there were ways enough open for me to be rich (1320-1325).

It is an important notion for Jonson, and a look at his education and some intellectual religious currents clarifies the profound nature of a remark that even Drummond may have taken lightly.

Camden's tutelage at Westminster (celebrated in *Epigrams* XIV) brought Jonson the occasion to study and to appreciate the writings of the classical past, an activity in which he delighted all his life — and one which he strongly advocated for others. In a section of *Discoveries* (2232-2237) in which he demonstrates his acquaintance with (and approbation of) the humanist program of education, he offers suggestions for a youth's reading list. After naming Livy, Sallust, Donne, and others, he recalls that Quintilian had recommended Homer and Virgil, and states that selections in reading matter

should be made with a view to the students' level of development. Here and elsewhere, we see Jonson's approach to the classics set firmly in the educational objectives of his day. Locating connections between classical and Christian thought in the period is certainly nothing new; many useful studies have established the adapting and adopting that operate in Renaissance thought.³ But a brief look at some foundational trends in educational and religious thought is useful in evaluating Jonson's assumptions. Morality and ethical behavior were as tied to the study of grammar, rhetoric, and poetry as they were to their own philosophical disciplines. There was material in the pagan works of the earlier era that remained valuable to a Christian society — principles and modes of behavior that, far from being contradictory to the tenets of Christianity, were quite consonant with codified religious faith.

Jonson's education and the humanist assumptions that surrounded the teaching and learning of the classical writers were not predicated on the notion that the models of the ancient world provided an alternative to belief. Even as orthodox and conservative as the Tridentine fathers acknowledged the value (albeit a limited one) of some of the classics when, in one of the council's closing documents, they stated that "Ancient books written by heathens may by reason of their elegance and quality of style be permitted, but may by no means be read to children."⁴ And more directly, Ignatius of Loyola, in the early days of the establishment of Jesuits' schools, argued for the benefits of the classics in developing a devout life once certain texts were reviewed for *dishonesty*,⁵ a clear indicator of the assumed religious connotations of "honesty." Rather than conclude from Jonson's love for classical writers that he was somehow more at home with their paganism and stoicism than with his contemporary world's Christianity, we might see how in his educational program he was taught to see the distinctions between the two.

In his studies of humanism and Christian humanism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, Henri Bremond has described a situation similar to Jonson's at Westminster School, in which professed Christians remained staunchly humanistic in their educational endeavors as the humanist movement itself experienced a division of religious and secular proponents:

Après l'humanisme chrétien de la renaissance, apparaît un humanisme indépendant qui semble se développer parallèlement à la pensée et à la vie chrétiennes, mais sans rapport nécessaire avec elles, un humanisme séparé, tacitement conçu comme étranger à la religion, indépendant du surnaturel, pouvant achever sa perfection propre en restant tout humain, humanisme de l'honnête homme.⁶

This separation between religion and the classics, handled smoothly by the schools of Port-Royal and the Jesuits,⁷ leads to important questions. Was the education that students of Jonson's day (in England or in France) received a unified endeavor, or actually two parallel "educations"? How closely were the classics aligned with religion? To what degree were they taught as valid contemporary models? And, at the heart of the matter, as Bremond as posed it: "Tel élève, peut-il sortir du collège de Clermont excellent humaniste et fort mauvais chrétien, n'ayant voulu suivre qu'une branche de l'enseignement"?⁸ Similarly, could Jonson have left Westminster — even if unwillingly — in confusion over the place of the classics in the life of a Christian? Not likely. From the beginning of the school day, when students and their teachers gathered for morning prayers, the daily routine was shaped around occasions of formal prayer and worship. Time was set aside for recitation of the Psalms, prayers for the Queen, thanksgiving for the school, choir lessons, and evening prayers.⁹ There was no equating religion and classical studies and, under Camden's careful scholarly eye, little chance to see the two as equal.

Most Christian thinkers had long allowed that some valid connections could be made between revealed truth and the attempts to ascertain that truth by the pagan classical writers. Indeed, by Jonson's time, a considerable amount of what would be formally classical had been absorbed into the corpus of orthodox Christian thought. From David MacPherson's catalogue of Jonson's library,¹⁰ we can see that in religious reading Jonson's taste ran to the eclectic: patristic writers who worked to accommodate pagan and Christian perspectives, for example, and humanists who saw religious matters as greater than isolated academic disciplines. In sum, the Christian Church had, to a degree, begun to come to terms with what would be labeled Renaissance anthropocentrism centuries before the fact, and we see the result in popular and scholarly religious texts and manuals of the time.

In his commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate*, Thomas Aquinas addresses the important distinction between faith and religion. Citing Cicero (in *De inventione*) as the one who had located religion within the province of justice, Thomas Aquinas maintains that "Religion also consists in activity regarding our neighbor"; he distinguishes the physical acts of worship (proper to the exercise of religion) from the mental acts of piety and faith. Faith is the source and cause of religion, and thus the underlying principle by which the cardinal virtues — demonstrated in human, social action — become valuable, or properly directed towards God.¹¹

Jonson is not unique in seeing the close relationship between faith and religion as Aquinas distinguished the terms. The classical calls to ethical

thought and virtuous action, far from being antithetical to Christian faith, had been absorbed into the works of Augustine, Anselm, Bernard, and many others. Thomas à Kempis' enormously popular *Imitation of Christ* (c. 1441) had, as Johan Huizinga describes it, rescued devotion from elitism and fanaticism and brought it back to everyday life.¹² Even this work, so clearly designed to focus the reader's energies on the spiritual life and dependence on God, emphasizes the humanity of Jesus and the need for a personal friendship with the God-made-man.¹³ Declining interest in scholastic debate and theological definition was, essentially, both a cause and an effect of an increasing interest in humanity. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries generally, we see a decrease in theological treatises and an accompanying interest in popular devotional writings. Among these, the most influential display careful attention to matters of behavior and social conduct in the secular world. In so doing, they carry on a Christian tradition, assumed from the biblical and patristic writers forward, in which faith and works, belief and virtuous actions, were to be intimately tied in human aspirations for salvation.

Two major examples of this genre illustrate the emphasis religious writers of the period placed on earthly conduct. The *Spiritual Exercises* of saint Ignatius Loyola (completed c. 1535) bear a clear explanation of their purpose: "to conquer oneself, and order one's life, without being influenced in one's decision by any inordinate affection." Central to the Ignatian work is the notion of a valid and proper "election" of a way of life, accompanied by the understanding that, although the ultimate purpose of a human being's life is to serve and honor God, all acts, words, and thoughts realized here on earth are nonetheless important.¹⁴ Similarly, saint François de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* (completed 1608) contains sections treating friendship, propriety in clothing, speech, games and pastimes, and the like, under the heading "Sundry Counsels Concerning the exercise of Virtues."¹⁵ Both works are grounded solidly in the belief that an emotional apprehension and desire for God were not enough to ensure one's spiritual well-being; the exercise of the traditional virtues was essential to a practising Christian. Religion was not simply a subscription to a body of teachings; it comprehended as well an earthly life well-lived.

For those like Jonson who had not chosen to enter the professed religious life or the academic life of theology, religion had everything to do with earthly affairs: morality and ethics, academically separate from the province of theology proper were, for the layman, the ordinary Christian, subjects most clearly aligned with religiosity. Faith in the central mysteries of Christianity (particularly the Resurrection and the Incarnation) did not cease to be the

supreme measure of one's spiritual state, but the practice of a good and virtuous life, the subject of moral philosophy, was not far behind. In this regard, writings in the period that treated matters of morality and virtue (or perhaps more often, immorality and vice) were not fundamentally secular. Similarly, literary acts of praise and admonishment for admirable or detestable qualities and actions gain their strength because of the religious values that a society presumes.

The artist's decision to sketch portraits of "characters" who are remarkable for their possession (or lack) of a particular trait, to mention virtues and vices, or to engage in either panegyrics or satiric attacks, to name a few common literary modes, actually makes no sense outside a given set of accepted standards. In Jonson's England, those standards were shaped by organized Christianity. The impetus of the popular devotional manuals, which exhorted all to a good and temperate life regardless of occupation or social status, reflected the notion that each individual held a place in a society which, in turn, took its place in divinely ordered creation. Religion and social theory were intimately tied.

Jonson certainly knew what he meant when he told Drummond that he most loved to be named "honest." The classical notion of "honesty," expounded by Aristotle and Cicero, had by Jonson's day come to mean more than the quality of being frank or existing in a state of honor. Aristotle had located the concept in the realm of Justice, and understood it to mean, in part, a sensitive perception of the rights of others and respect for their property.¹⁶ Cicero identified it with both decorous behavior and an ethical respect for truthfulness.¹⁷ It stood as Seneca's supreme good and Quintilian's highest aspiration for the writer or speaker. As a scrupulous approach to social involvement and activity, honesty, embracing moderation and good taste, was central to the classical period's attitude towards personal appearance and conduct. But without the promise of an eternal life with God in heaven, the classical writers extolled honest temporal behavior for its own inherent value and for its contribution to social harmony.

In Christian writings, however, the same *type* of behavior drew its value from being an appropriate mirror of divine order that pleased God. In this light, Jonson records from Lipsius in *Discoveries*:

Truth is man's proper good; and the only immortal thing, was given to our mortality to use. No good Christian, or Ethnic, if he be honest, can miss it: No statesman, or patriot should. For without truth all the actions of mankind, are craft, malice, or what you will, rather than wisdom (659-665).

During the medieval period, the highly complex (and versatile) term came to be associated with both secular courtly behavior and religiosity.¹⁸ Jonson's

own copy of Mancinus' *De quattuor fontibus honestatis, qui a ratione habent originem*, a Latin poem on the four cardinal virtues,¹⁹ is but one example of a religious work that assumes the religiosity of *honestas*; from the thirteenth century on, ecclesiastical canons treating clerical behavior were often titled "De vita et honestate clericorum."²⁰ C. Stephen Jaeger has shown that the Ciceronian association of propriety in both word and deed with *honestas* developed in such a way that the term eventually found its way into baptismal directives. As time passed, Saint Ambrose clarified Cicero's claim that there could be no *honestas* without *decorum* by comparing the two concepts to physical beauty and health: there could be no physical beauty without health, and so decorous acts were necessary indicators of inner virtue. If externals such as manners, appropriate dress, and disciplined speech mirrored inner virtue, Jaeger argues, then the fostering of these things was an obligation, especially for a cleric living "honestly" in the world.²¹ The coupling of external actions and appearances — including acts of speech — with inner virtue is so common in the Renaissance that it is impossible to select an individual writer as the source or principal spokesman. Thus it is not surprising that *honestas* should have a prominent place in Renaissance thought.

Donna C. Stanton has described the regeneration of the classical *honnête homme* in Renaissance and seventeenth-century France as a highly conscious, highly stylized phenomenon in which classical elegance in speech and gesture became the standards by which a man established himself in polished society.²² Courtiership, defined in Castiglione, found its finest expressions in those of noble birth; excellence in arms, athletics, and arts, garnished with requisite *sprezzatura* was to be displayed to gain the favorable opinion of others — especially those in power. For the writer, elegance and eloquence, according to Quintilian's ideal, were to be developed through "priestly dedication."²³ Living well, as it were, and consciously performing to maintain style, became an end unto itself. The form, to borrow the literary term, could exist as the content. This exclusively secular approach to life, evidenced in French authors like the Chevalier de Méré, and later in local adaptations and translations of Castiglione, was a by-product of humanism, and one from which Jonson wished to separate himself. Jonson's remark to Drummond that he loved to be named "honest" above all other labels deserves a closer look because he was intimately involved in a courtly world that had often rewarded empty courtly performance with material benefits; he loved the title, or "style," because he saw himself as worthy of its original meaning. What makes honesty religious is its foundation in Justice, where people are praised or censured according to their

words and deeds. religion, as we have seen in Aquinas, bears heavily on the quality of individual conduct and on human relationships. Justice, as a virtue promoted by the Christian faith, demands that people treat each other fairly — as Augustine said, it demands that we "give every man his due."²⁴ Prudence further demands that judgments be realistic, and this sometimes means singling out the aberrant for correction, sometimes singling out the virtuous for praise.

In the dedicatory letter to the Earl of Pembroke, Jonson termed his *Epigrams* the "ripest" of his studies, and chose to open the collection with an admonition to readers: "To read it well: that is, to understand." This caveat is not a particularly warm welcome to the poetic world that follows it, but nonetheless draws attention early to the fact that the verses that comprise the collection were composed and chosen for publication deliberately and carefully. Often portraits of contemporary people and manners, the *Epigrams* collectively offer both glimpses into the day's conduct and, more importantly, points of entry into Jonson's attitude towards prevailing customs and morals.²⁵

Jonson wastes no time in separating himself from inept poets who had given epigrams a bad name, and concludes the second poem with a proverbial musing:

He that departs with his own honesty
For vulgar praise, doth it too dearly buy (13-14).

This apparently conventional closing actually introduces an important warning to the reader. The poems will be "honest," that is, truthful in their content and sincere in their judgments; and the speaker, too, will be prudent and consistent in his standards for criticism and praise. What will guard them both from "vulgar praise" is the absence of the shocking and the merely flattering. Conventional panegyric adulation and clever, but nonetheless artless, profanity, the stuff of incompetent poetry, are the province of the self-stylized versifier, but not the basis of this poet's verses. From the outset of the collection, we see a poet who states at once that he is working within a tradition (that of classical epigram) and outside current practice. This gap between form and content provides a useful parallel to the larger gap Jonson created between his own efforts at self-advancement through the courtier system and those of the vain pretenders whose external form — in dress, speech, and fawning manners — revealed all there was to see of their personal content — their morals, values, and vision.

Jonson condemns alchemists for their abuses of knowledge and intellectual power (VI), brothel proprietors who conceal the facts of their shops by renaming them "hot-houses" (VII), and courtiers who use their wealth to

obstruct due process of the law (VIII). An unscrupulous Lieutenant Shift and an unprincipled Doctor Empiric close a group of poems designed to highlight an unsavory sector of Jonson's society. Though Jonson had claimed to be no "herald" (IX), these poems, as much because of as despite their apparent simplicity and clarity, have tempted many to see in them the expressions of a self-righteous judge, the observations of a morally superior being meting out poetic death sentences for crimes of fraud, lust, and gluttony. Such are the subjects, moreover, favored by the pseudo-ethical *honnête homme*, who in his decrees affirms a commonly accepted set of behavioral norms by citing those who are unable — or unwilling — to elevate themselves to his own aristocratic code. But far from playing here the honest man, Jonson may be searching out that which, as Robert Wiltenburg puts it, distinguishes the moralizer from the moralist:

The "moralizer" pretends to an authority derived from his own spurious purity, the "moralist" relies upon his own intimate experience of the temptations and vices he condemns and warns against . . . the speaker's close involvement with the objects of his criticism and his own self-criticism, make him more moralist than moralizer. . .²⁶

Readers like Wiltenburg help us locate Jonson's moral authority in an acute self-awareness earned by experience both of temptation and reformation. In failing to take seriously Jonson's often expressed religious concerns, we can too easily miss the fine distinction between hollow form and perfectly matched form and content: honest morality honestly set forth.

Jonson the moralist is everywhere to be seen in the *Epigrams* — and to be sure, he draws amply on classical ethics throughout. Yet as he separated himself from the pedestrian versifier at the start of the collection, he separates himself from the secular neo-classicist and the secular honest man in specific expressions of faith. Jonson's admiration for the beauty of classical language and rhetoric — the "priestly dedication" with which he strove to shape and refine his expression — and his ability to travel in court circles assume a very different face when placed in this light.

On at least five occasions in *Epigrams* (XXXVI, XLIII, LV, XCI, CXXV), Jonson addresses the matter of empty flattery, terming it "common poets' shame" in an epigram to Robert, Earl of Salisbury (XLIII). Here and elsewhere, when he raises the issue of questionable praise, Jonson echoes a highly orthodox Christian tradition. In his study of the social aspects of Jonson's poetry, D. Heyward Brock traces Jonson's concept of valid praise back to Aquinas, who maintains that praise differs from flattery primarily in its motivation. The flatterer extols with the primary intention of self-gain; the

one who praises authentically does so for a higher purpose.²⁷

The persons (or character-types) who receive praise from Jonson do so because their lives are consonant with the virtuous precepts fostered by religion. Jonson is highly conscious of the qualities in his subjects' lives that justify their being called "virtuous," yet he carefully qualifies his acclaim for a well-lived earthly life by indicating that a good life points to a higher order. Where pagan classical poets could elevate an individual's life to the status of a paradigm and stop there (since they operated outside the notions of a providential God who promised a resurrection and eternal life), Jonson cannot. In the first epigram on Sir John Roe (XXVII), the minor poet claimed by the plague, Jonson writes, "If any pious life e'er lifted man / To heaven, his hath." Calling attention to a significant departure from pagan elegiacs, in which the life was extolled for its own sake, Jonson terms Roe's death a "happy state" that has brought him to everlasting life, a state in which the believer — here mirroring the speaker and the poet — might "glory."

After four portraits of vice (in the persons of Don Surly, Sir Annual Tilter, Person Guilty, and Bank the Usurer), Jonson returns to Roe for two more epigrams: one briefly cataloguing his life, and the other expounding the inevitability of death. This second poem offers a brief disclaimer that Jonson will not "offend" Roe or do violence to his memory by shedding "a vain tear more," since a believer vanquishes grief through faith. Unlike the previous poems on Roe, however, this one shifts its focus from the deceased to the speaker himself before the text is halfway completed. Immediately after invoking the truism, *sic transit gloria mundi*, so often resonant in medieval *consolatio* poetry ("thou art but gone before, / Whither the world must follow"), Jonson revitalizes the aphorism by shifting the focus back to himself and his all-too-earthly state: "And I, now, / Breathe to expect my when, and make my how." Moreover, though the poem appears less about the subject than the speaker, it is not a vain or indulgent exercise because both subject and speaker here become the vehicles for a larger truth, an article of faith.

Claiming that any one who "wets [his] grave" with tears "can be no friend," Jonson condemns the sin of despair and affirms his belief that an active, virtuous life must be valued primarily for its capacity to earn a personal resurrection. The mourner can be no "friend" because he does not share Jonson's fundamental beliefs. Genuine friendship is predicated on common values, and while it may admit intellectual differences and disagreements, it cannot survive when the individuals' spiritual values are threatened. The text of the next epigram, "Of Death" (XXXIV), makes this clear.

In two short lines, Jonson anchors his epigrams in an unmistakably Christian tradition:

He that fears death, or mourns it, in the just
Shows of the resurrection little trust.

The poem's brevity, far from indicating lack of interest in the subject, underscores its basic truth: one either believes or does not. Faith in the resurrection is not an optional tenet; it is fundamental. By moving from the "I" of the previous poem to the more objective "he" in this one, Jonson consciously aligns himself with those who do believe. This is the pattern, too, in the Cary-Morison Ode (*Underwoods* LXX) where, after proclaiming that "Morison's not dead," Jonson writes that Morison

. . . leapt the present age,
Possessed with holy rage,
To see that bright eternal day:
Of which we priests, and poets say
Such truths, as we expect for happy men,
And there he lives with memory: and Ben
Jonson! Who sung thus of him, ere he went
Himself to rest,
Or taste a part of that full joy he meant
To have expressed (79-88)

In the introductory dedicatory letter to *Epigrams*, Jonson admitted to a fear that "the vices therein [the *Epigrams*] will be owned before the virtues." In the same vein, the social criticisms and earthly praises, too, are easier to perceive than Jonson's religious values. More syllables are spent in the service of social observation and criticism than on explicitly spiritual matters; but, on such a matter as belief in the resurrection, verbosity could only cheapen an intrinsic article of faith.

Jonson's praise for the virtuous lives and achievements of King James, John Donne, the Sidney family collectively, Lucy (Countess of Bedford), and Katherine Aubigny, among others (in *Epigrams* and *The Forest*), demonstrates his conviction that good lives and noble acts mirror divinely-ordered harmony and temperate behavior. In stark contrast to these examples, however, lie epigrams devoted to those whose very being constitutes an affront to religious values. Jonson pays particular attention in this regard to courtiers — those in Jonson's perception most prone to assume the guise of the honest man — who, in their elevated social position, not only fail to see themselves in the important

role of counsellor, but fail to draw upon religious and ethical values. Their actions are prompted less by genuine subscription to admirable ideals than by a clever perception of social expectations.

"Courtling" (LXXII) offends not only in his "judgment," but in his very existence ("Thy person only, Courtling, is the vice"). "Fine Grand" (LXIII), similarly, is vain and indecent not only for his appearance and affected manners, but for the way he sees himself. "English Monsieur" (LXXXVIII) is perhaps the worst of the group, and his adoption of French manners call no small attention to the *honnête homme* movement in France. Having assumed so much of the external puffery of the French courtier that "his whole body should speak French," English Monsieur has trained himself to the point that even native Frenchmen appear "Dutch" or patently foreign in his company. He is wholly unnatural, perhaps the product of syphilitic relations, and so concerned with appearance that Jonson suggests he may actually have been conceived and born "clothes and all." Closing the scathing description is the suggestion that Monsieur helps the economy — and furthers the cause of his empty sociability — by parading himself at St. Paul's, ironically the locus for both religious service and tasteless social-climbing. In their self-serving lives, false courtiers, and pretenders to an aristocracy that should be governed by religion, create a society that is in fact anti-social, and thus unreligious.²⁸

Jonson's clearest epigrammatic comment on the religiosity of a good earthly life appears in "Of Life and Death" (LXXX). In juxtaposing life and death, and sin and good deeds, Jonson recalls the central metaphor of the medieval morality plays: an accounting before God for the quality of life on earth. The poem opens with the stark observation that "The ports of death are sins; of life, good deeds," making the cause of sin either the willful commission of an evil act or the failure to perform a virtuous one. Jonson then moves to a strong statement of the role free choice plays in every person's life:

How wilful blind is he then, that would stray,
And hath it, in his powers, to make his way! (3-4)

Since "This world death's region is," Jonson claims, "it should be one of our first strifes, / So to front death" (5-7). The clearest way to ensure a favorable judgment, here simply presumed, is to live virtuously by making prudent, ethical choices in matters of thought and action.

This is certainly simple advice, but it is not a simple or gratuitous borrowing from *Everyman*. It is rather an echo of an important passage in the Book of Revelation that helps clarify Jonson's practice of seeing ethical

stances as inherently religious. After discussing the errors of those whose lives are guided by “the beast,” that is, a false god and a false set of values, the biblical passage addresses the fate of those who choose the invalid life, the life outside the divine intention for humanity:

And the smoke of their torments goes up forever and ever; and they rest neither day nor night, they who have worshiped the Beast and its image, and anyone who receives the mark of its name. Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus . . . Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. They shall find rest from their labors, and their good deeds shall accompany them.

(14:11-13)²⁹

The union of faith and commandments for moral behavior is significant for Jonson. Ethical, moral behavior does not exist for its own sake, nor for the objectives of a society that points only to its own well-being. The emptiness of manners without morals, of actions and attitudes without a religious base, is unnatural, because it is self-directed. “Good men but see death, [but] the wicked taste it,” primarily because one is motivated by a higher sense of purpose in life of which the other is incapable. For the empty courtier, the sycophantic flatterer, or the foppish dilettante, the means to social success, grounded wholly in externals and the hope for present gain, are ends unto themselves.

Placed where it is, immediately before condemnations of “Prowl and Plagiary” and “Cashiered Captain Surly,” this epigram on life and death serves brilliantly as a comment on the necessary distinction between the temporal and the eternal. The gap between the two is irreparable, and even when Jonson couches a discussion of life and death — or heaven and earth — in classical allusions (as in CXX, the Epigraph on S. P., a Child of Q[ueen] E[Lizabeth’s] Chapel”), he arrives at the conclusion that an innocent child’s life, unmarked by sin, is so pleasing in the eyes of the divine, that “being so much too good for earth, / Heaven vows to keep him” (23-24). Innocence, temperate behavior, judicious praise, and thoughtful criticism are proper hallmarks of the Christian, and Jonson continues to demonstrate his interest in, and knowledge of, religious precepts by punctuating his treatment of human conduct with references to traditional spiritual sources. When he writes about the excesses of the Deadly Sins of lust and gluttony (“On Groin” [CXVII] and “On Gut” [CXVIII]), again recalling a medieval didacticism still serviceable in his day, Jonson (even if coincidentally) echoes a patristic predecessor: in his *Confessions*, Augustine had treated the same two topics in the same order.³⁰

The superficial nature of what was passing for contemporary erudition and gentle manners comes under attack with striking clarity in the portraits of "Lip the Teacher" (LXXV) and the pseudo-statement of "The New Cry" (XCII). Puritanical Lip, straying from his "text" at St. Paul's "T'inveigh against players," shows himself guilty of all the falseness he condemns in actors and plays. Similarly, the conscious posturing of the young but already "ripe" statesmen shows them to be little more than their "ruffs," "cuffs," "beards," and "gait." Affecting "grave" countenances as they discuss world affairs, they project an artificial concern for the politics of a world they know only through maps and almanacs. "As forbidden books they get," yet they shake their heads disapprovingly at the mention of the Pope and feign sadness over the murder of the French King Henri IV. They rail against the Puritan "Brethren" and the established bishops, yet "Much like those Brethren," who presume they can "prevail / With ignorance on us," an uninformed laity of sorts, they commit the serious error of condemning others without just cause. They possess, in other words, the appearance of prudence and integrity; but lacking a refined and requisite grounding in religious values, they offer only gossipy criticism, clever means to encode and decode messages, and vain pronouncements on the quality of others' lives. They seek not so much to interpret or correct the social state as to draw attention to their capacity for doing so; in this self-delusion, they fall squarely into the realm of the genuinely artificial and dishonest.

Jonson's epigram "On the Town's Honest Man" (CXV) stands, in many ways, as a summary of his attitude towards the artifice that had established itself as a social commonplace. Often thought to be directed to Inigo Jones, this lengthy epigram attacks in precise terms the behavioral patterns of the purely secular, purely selfish, contemporary perversion of the classical model that had once embodied religious ideals for pagans. Prudently declining to name his target, and thereby making the piece both specific and general, Jonson categorizes the honest man as "no vicious person, but the Vice / About the town" (5-6). There is again a medieval quality in Jonson's use of the stereotypical character-name from the morality plays, but he quickly moves to specific offenses that make his subject particularly contemporary. What makes this portrait singularly interesting is the manner in which Jonson not only shows his subject to be blatantly artificial and self-styled, but also supremely inept in projecting even these traits.

The honest man is "a subtle thing," and thus dangerous in his ability to captivate an audience with loud and bawdy talk, news and noise. At social gatherings, he seeks out the name of an "unwelcome" member of the community and, seizing on this knowledge as an occasion to establish himself as a

worthy confidant and friend, “Tells of him, all the tales” that will ruin what is left of the man’s character. Should the tide turn, and should the present company question his capacity for solid moral criticism, he recants the stories and, in so doing, makes critical judgments of virtue and vice entirely relative. Drawing on established guidelines for courtiership, Jonson then describes his subject’s tepid morality with a parallel to his physical prowess. The honest man can indeed play and entertain, and can “Do all, that longs to the anarchy of drink, / Except the duel” (12-13), and will “see its sister naked, ere a sword” (22). Here Jonson walks a curious line, for at least one Gabriel Spencer and one Flemish soldier could have testified to Jonson’s combative skills if they had been alive. Yet he is not extolling violence. What Jonson finds objectionable in this instance — highlighted by the use of the impersonal pronoun “its” — is the *honest* man’s cowardice; the subject seeks the appearance of the true courtier, but lacks substance, having substituted bluster and bravado for genuine, honorable bravery. Jonson is not suggesting that a man’s worth is measured by his capacity for battle, but rather that the *honest* man’s incapacity for what had become a requisite court talent (in arms) shows him to be fraudulent even in his claims to the artifice of *honest* behavior.

Before pronouncing the town’s honest man “her errant’st knave” in the closing line, Jonson describes his subject’s excesses in theatricality. Before a meal has quite finished (“the cloth’s no sooner gone”), the honest man inflicts himself on the company by proceeding to “play more / Parts, than the Italian could do,” including the “old Iniquity” figure of the morality plays (26-27). His motivation for entertaining, however, is as flawed as his own morality. His object is neither to instruct nor to delight, but to garner as much praise as he can for his efforts at a particular moment. Again, Jonson condemns an artist — if he can be so termed — that points to nothing but himself. The honest man pretends to a life as “An engineer, in slanders, of all fashions,” but his product is not genuine and his “seeming praises, are, yet accusations” since they come from an impulse to base flattery instead of the desire to compliment in order to affirm what is worthy of emulation.

Jonson’s brief tribute to Sir William Uvedale (CXXV) underscores his capacity to distinguish external polish from innate virtue and temporal perfection from eternal value. In a world that had lost its sense of “Nature” and “virtue,” Uvedale stands in Jonson’s terms as a storehouse of the values of “the first times,” in which the current world “might find / Restoréd in [his] body, and [his] mind” the virtues that make a person worthy of the name human. Jonson says that “Who sees a soul, in such a body set, / Might love the treasure

for the cabinet." But Jonson recognizes that attractive externals are commendable only when they signal a temperate, virtuous, and generous character:

But I, no child, no fool, respect the kind,
The full, the flowing graces there enshrined;
Which (would the world not miscall't flattery)
I could adore, almost t'idolatry. (7-10)

What preserves Jonson from idolatry, essentially, is his motivation for praising Uvedale. The subject's virtues, his excellences, move Jonson to perceive in him a respect for his own being that comes from his regard for himself as divinely-created. Uvedale's life improves society because it offers a behavioral model worthy of imitation. It would be idolatrous to praise Uvedale for his own sake; but since his life has been shaped in such a way that he works in the court system (he was knighted in 1613) without compromising his values, he actually illuminates the falseness of godless pretenders by being natural and by seeing his social position in proper perspective.

In *The Forest*, the second collection of poetry in Jonson's Folio, he again praises the virtuous, and again includes poems that place his standards in a religious framework. Jonson follows his most admired poem, "To Penshurst," with a lengthy tribute to Sir Robert Wroth. Both poems celebrate the virtues of country life and praise a harmonious balance between natural bounty and the prudent use of natural gifts. Both poems make a point of the necessity of innocence in a virtuous life. In "Penshurst," Jonson terms Philip Sidney's children "A fortune, in this age, but rarely known," because

They are, and have been taught religion: thence
Their gentler spirits have sucked innocence. (93-94)

In the poem to Wroth, Jonson advises similarly, "Strive Wroth, to live long innocent" (66), and "Let thousands more go flatter vice, and win, / By being organs to great sin" (85-86). Innocence, understood to mean a detachment from worldly materialism, is the quality that makes the subjects' lives admirable. Greatness in appearance, greatness in lineage, and greatness in spirit are cited for praise in these works because they are shaped by spiritual values.

When Jonson observes that the Sidney children may "Read, in their virtuous parents' noble parts, / The mysteries of manners, arms, and arts" (97-98), he is calling attention to the principles of courtiership that had become empty, external graces at the hands of the self-directed, those whose homes are "proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else" (101). When the external appearance of the homestead indicates a desire on the owner's part to display wealth

and privilege, Jonson reads (quite fairly) that the owner's character is also shallow. In the Wroth poem, Jonson defines the relationship between earthly possessions and the divine intention for their use when he confidently states,

God wisheth, none should wrack on a strange shelf:
To him, man's dearer, than t'himself.
And, howsoever we may think things sweet,
He always gives what he knows meet,
Which who can use is happy: such be thou. (95-99)

Jonson was doubtless aware of the complexity of the term "happy" in describing the state of a person who was using God's gifts properly. His Latin vocabulary would have contained more than one suitable equivalent for the English word: *felix* and *beatus*, the word that opens each of the biblical "Beatitudes," and which may be translated as either "happy" or "blessed."³¹ In his closing statement to Wroth, Jonson asks that he might "think life, a thing but lent," and in so doing, closes the poem on a distinctly (albeit conventional) religious note. This is significant, for it is the second time in as many poems that Jonson moves the reader to see that he is operating from a spiritual perspective after beginning with secular matter. He is motivated to praise not from the impulse to flatter that marks the shallow honest man, but from a desire to show that, in a world that had become acquisitive and ostentatious (a theme to which he turns so often in the plays), people and places with fixed and enduring values continued to exist and provide worthy models.

To emphasize the spiritual basis of his praise for people and places on earth, Jonson stresses in "To the World" (IV) that material objects, "what thou [the world] call'st thy gifts are baits" to lure the unsuspecting into communion with a force "both shrunk up, and old." Describing the world as "but a shop / Of toys, and trifles, traps, and snares, / To take the weak," Jonson labels those who mistake temporal pleasure as the highest form of delight (and so "make thee [the world] as saint"), "only fools." From material objects, Jonson moves on to intellectual matters, and describes the earth as a soil

Where envious arts profess'd be,
And pride, and ignorance the schools,
Where nothing is examined, weigh'd,
But, as 'tis rumored, so believed (47-50)

When intellectuals endeavors cease to be prompted by a sincere heart and mind, they assume the same perversity as material objects that are elevated by the "basest of fools" to the state of sanctity.³²

Jonson continues this line of thought in the "Epode" (XI) in which he expounds some common notions about controlling the passions through reason. True love, he maintains, is a divine essence, "let down from heaven." At this point, he calls on the traditional concept of a golden chain connecting heaven and earth, but he does so in an unusual way. The chain metaphor can be found in writings from Homer and Plato, of course, and had become an established Renaissance metaphor for universal order. Yet Jonson qualifies his use here by stating that love, "in a calm and god-like unity, / Preserves community" (53-54), rather than establishes imposed order. The man or woman who loves generously — both spiritually and romantically — enjoys "A form more flesh than are the Eden bowers." Motivation again becomes Jonson's central concern: he had already addressed proper motivation for praise and compliment, and now, preparing us for the closing lines of the last poem in the collection, Jonson insists that

He that for love of goodness hateth ill,
Is more crown-worthy still,
Than he, which for sin's penalty forbears.
His heart sins, though he fears. (87-90)

This Pauline concept is a subtle but strong testimony to Jonson's belief that a God deserving of love who has prescribed standards for behavior does indeed exist. The poet anticipates a moment in time when he will have to address his Senecan borrowing: "Man may securely sin, but safely, never." Jonson consciously removes the notion of an individual conscience as the arbiter of virtue, which may be understood in classical terms as the singular force to which one must answer, and allows the line to indicate God as the final judge. The Pauline echo further anchors the poem in Christian values. Goodness, insofar as it approximates the nature of God on earth, is a state worthy of love and admiration for its own sake, and "ill," or evil, is detestable because (to borrow Augustine's argument) it signifies the willful turning away from God — or worse the absence of God. The passage is a thoughtful and clear statement of Jonson's understanding of what theology distinguishes as perfect and imperfect contrition.³⁴

Elsewhere in *The Forest*, Jonson addresses some contemporary responses to his poetry. In the epistle "To Katherine, Lady Aubigny" (XII), he describes the environment in which he lives and works, and raises the important matter of his own source of values. Critics have not been kind to him, and out of guilt over their iniquity, he says, have seen fit to "indict" his wit. In spite of this pressure, however, he insists:

[I] have not altered yet my look,
 Or so myself abandoned, as because
 Men are not just, or keep no holy laws
 Of nature, and society, I should faint;
 Or fear to draw true lines, 'cause others paint (16-20)

It would appear that this is a passage in which Jonson confesses a secular ethical stance, in which nature and society define their own guidelines that stand “holy” by themselves. An earlier passage, however, ensures that we should not take this reading. Jonson describes himself as “at feud / With sin and vice, though with a throne endued” (9-10), and once again echoes Paul, who in his epistles had spoken of his earthly life as a “good fight,” marked by perseverance in the face of criticism and loss, that would earn him a crown of justice in heaven.³⁵

Such an intimate relationship between genuine honesty, justice, and corrective criticism can be traced to solid biblical sources. The classical practice of associating honesty with justice is repeated in Paul’s epistles. In the Pauline echoes, Jonson shows himself to be as aware of explicitly Christian thought on the subjects as of pagan classical thought.

The closing poem in *The Forest*, “To Heaven” (XV), is an intricately composed testimony to faith and, in the context of its location as the final poem in the group, an important reminder of the first poem in the *Epigrams*, where readers were advised to read well and understand. “To Heaven” is in many respects a final request for understanding both collections. Reminders of Augustine and Paul, authors with whom Jonson could feel comfortable, set up clear statements of orthodoxy: belief in a good and great triune God whose justice will bring all to an accounting, reverence for the theological virtues, confidence in divine omnipotence, and fear that personal shortcomings might obstruct passage to eternal life. The opening lines, in which Jonson expresses his upset over being misunderstood in his religiosity (“Good, and great God, can I not think of thee, / But it must, straight, my melancholy be?”) are central to understanding that Jonson was well aware of his own complexity — and well aware of his tendency to non-conformity. Yet by following his opening enquiries with established religious principles, Jonson reminds his reader that, as his religious practices and faith are not to be judged by the degree to which he appears pious, his poems of praise and criticism are not to be judged as fundamentally secular by the degree to which individual lines or images can be traced to classical sources or models.

The requests for understanding in the first poem of *Epigrams* and the last poem of *The Forest* are serious, unpretentious moments. Jonson knew that his

survival depended largely on his ability to produce works that would gain public notice. Success on the stage and success with the printed page could be secured, however, only with the help of influential patrons and benefactors. A truncated education had closed many doors to Jonson, and he was forced, so to speak, to make the patronage system (and its accompanying courtier society) work for him. Competition for support was fierce, and Jonson was aware that he would have to curb his independent spirit if he were to establish a living for himself. The facts of the social system and of its control over artistic creations are impossible to overlook. Like any other person, Jonson was dependent on the world and on his share of its material things for survival. But a prudent estimation of how to earn a living — and this obviously precludes fawning dishonesty — is not contrary to religious practice.³⁶ Jonson elects to state central religious truths that lie beyond a temporal need to secure patronage.

Robert C. Evans has suggested that in the epistle to Katherine Aubigny, for example, Jonson "played up to, played on, and played with his superiors' insecurities" in an effort to overcome his own anxieties over the competition that shaped the literary world.³⁷ There was little to be gained, however, by confessing faith in the Resurrection, reverence for the Incarnation, or respect for the Virgin Mary. In a predominantly (even if nominally) Christian society, such concepts — save possibly the Marian notes — could be assumed of members of virtually any sect. Evans' observation is important, but one that points us again at Jonson's fear of being misunderstood.³⁸

His choice to expound some basic doctrinal matters is a great testimony to his efforts to be understood. The shameless flattery and the empty manners that could secure financial support, perhaps fame, for the morally unprincipled are things Jonson consciously wished to avoid, since they reflected a secularism that had destroyed the higher principles of *honestas*. To Jonson, appearances had in many ways replaced authentic virtue in daily affairs, and the poems that take religious topics for their subject matter set him apart from contemporaries who violated — or ignored — the essentially spiritual basis for honesty and who lamented the times simply because it was fashionable to decry error or immorality. These poems are strong reminders that Jonson could draw upon the classics without abandoning the basic tenets of faith. Further, they are reminders that a person can just as well look at the world and still be religious as he can maintain the body without losing the soul.

As Robert Wiltenburg has observed, there is more to Jonson's Senecan motto, *Tanquam explorator*, than we might have thought: "the motto implies that what is done matters less than the manner and purpose of the action."³⁹

Unless we restrict our understanding of religious writing to mean only confessional or mystical works, Jonson's poems leave no doubt about his commitment to the search for religious truths; and references to classical sources are thus less important in themselves than the religious truths they may help to illuminate. If we approach the poems with the intent to "read well, that is, to understand," as Jonson asks, the references to important religious tenets serve to prevent a misunderstanding rooted in seeing the secularity without the spiritual motivation, or the honesty without the religious base.

University of Delaware

Notes

1. All references to Jonson's writings are to line numbers in *Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (Middlesex: Penguin, 1988).
2. In *Discoveries* alone, there are at least eight occurrences of the term (or its antonym), all of which concern morality or virtuous behavior. See *Discoveries* 105-15, 216-19, 548-51, 659-73, 813-18, 1320-25, 2881-83, 3266-69.
3. See, among others, Isabel Rivers' introductory study, *Classical and Christian Ideas in Renaissance Poetry* (London & Boston: G. Allen and Unwin, 1979), and Paul Oskar Kristeller's standard *Renaissance Thought: The Classical, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961).
4. "Rules Concerning Prohibited Books," VII, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, ed. and trans. H. J. Schroeder, O.P. (1941; rpt. Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1971), p. 275.
5. John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 256.
6. Henri Bremond, *Autour de l'humanisme: d'Érasme à Pascal* (Paris: Grasset, 1936), p. 30.
7. See among others Bro. Cecilian Streenbing, F.S.C., *Devout Humanism as a Style: St. François de Sales' "Introduction à la vie dévote"* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1954), 18 ff.
8. Bremond, p. 33.
9. See Rosalind Miles, *Ben Jonson: His Life and Work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 14.
10. David McPherson, "Ben Jonson's Library and Marginalia: An Annotated Catalogue," *Studies in Philology*, 71 (1974): 1-106.
11. St. Thomas Aquinas, "Commentary on the *De Trinitate* of Boethius, ques. 3, art. 2," *Faith, Reason, and Theology (Questions I-IV of his Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius)*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987), pp. 70-74.

12. Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1949, rpt. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday/Anchor Books, 1954), p. 225.
13. See *The Imitation of Christ*, Book II.
14. *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, trans W. H. Longridge, 2nd. ed. (London: Robert Scott, 1922), pp. xxix, 125.
15. St. François de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. Allan Ross (Westminster: Newman Press, 1951), pp. 34-35.
16. See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V.
17. See *De Officiis*, Book III.
18. Andreas Capellanus' twelfth-century treatise on courtly love, the *De Amore*, bears the alternate title, *De Arte Honeste Amandi*, in several manuscripts. See *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger & al. enl. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), s.v. "courtly love."
19. Central to Mancinus' model is Aquinas' understanding that the cardinal virtues (Prudence, Justice, Magnanimity, and Temperance) are intimately related to natural ethics; this feature doubtless appealed to Jonson in his effort to see ethical matters as religious, without further academic distinction. Also see McPherson's brief description in his catalogue, p. 65.
20. I am indebted to Professor Lawrence Duggan for information on the medieval church legislation.
21. C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courty Ideals, 939-1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), esp. pp. 117, 128, 147, 179.
22. Donna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the "Honnête Homme" and the "Dandy" in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), esp. pp. 14-30.
23. Stanton, pp. 16, 19.
24. *City of God* 19.4.
25. On Jonson's *persona* and the presence of his own voice in the poems, see Edward Partridge, "Jonson's *Epigrammes*: The Named and the Nameless," *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 6 (1973): 158-198; and Robert Wiltenburg, *Ben Jonson and Self-Love: The Subtlest Maze of All* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1990), pp. 45-47.
26. Wiltenburg, p. 47.
27. D. Heyward Brock, "Praise and Dispraise: Salient Social Aspects of Ben Jonson's Poetry," *English Miscellany*, 26-27 (1975), p. 202.
28. See Jaeger, pp. 178-179, for interesting citations from eleventh-century texts that present foreign clothing, haircuts, and manners as threats to the very honor of a kingdom.
29. Here, for a clear parallel, the New Catholic translation. Many other translations — including Rheims, Geneva, and King James — render the phrase "good deeds" as "good works." The difference is, however, semantic rather than substantive.

30. *Confessions* 10.31: "Go not after thy lusts, and from pleasure turn away . . . Take away from me . . . the desires of the belly." *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. Rex Warner (New York: New American Library, 1963). Jonson's library indicates a taste for patristic writers; further, in the "Execration upon Vulcan" commemorating the fire of 1623 that destroyed his library and papers, Jonson mentions "twice twelve years stored up humanity, / With humble gleanings in divinity; / After the Fathers and those wiser guides / Whom faction had not drawn to study sides" (101-6).
31. Jonson demonstrates awareness of these meanings in "Eupheme" (*Miscellaneous Poems*, LXXXIV) when, after a lengthy passage describing a soul in heaven as enjoying "an eternal holiday of rest" (63) brought about by the resurrection, he offers a beatific vision (itself described by Paul and Augustine of Hippo) of the risen Christ by asking, "What fulness of beatitude is here?" (137). In one of the church's most ancient and venerable texts, the *Exsultet* sung at the Easter Vigil as the proclamation of death's defeat, the term *felix* is used to describe the Fall of Man ("O felix culpa!") that eventually brought forth the greater joy and redemption by Christ, an occasion of happiness that permits entry into the state of blessedness, or beatitude. See also the passages from the Cary-Morison Ode (*Underwoods* LXX) above.
32. In *The Action of Ben Jonson's Poetry* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), Sara van den Berg observes that in three of his longest poems ("To the Memory of . . . William Shakespeare," "An Execration upon Vulcan," and "An Epistle to One that Asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben"), Jonson actually "celebrates a gain as much as he mourns a loss" (p. 143). In this, he demonstrates a great capacity for seeing things in their Christian perspective.
33. Parfitt's translation of Seneca, *Phaedra* 162-64, in *Poems*, 514.
34. This is not a modern theological distinction. Jonson would have known the difference by way of his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church, if not from his upbringing in and practice of Anglicanism.
35. See Philippians 3:7-16; and 2 Timothy 4:7-8.
36. See again the entry from *Discoveries* 1320-23, recorded from Pliny.
37. Robert C. Evans, *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), p. 39.
38. See Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 50 ff.
39. Wiltenburg, p. 17.